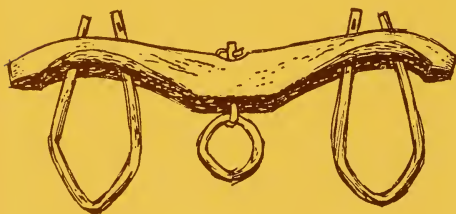


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Lincoln the Commander In
Chief

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LINCOLN THE COMMANDER IN CHIEF


By

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Department of History
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Baton Rouge, Louisiana



Address at Annual Meeting
LINCOLN FELLOWSHIP OF WISCONSIN
Madison
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CONCERNING T. HARRY WILLIAMS, AUTHOR

The accompanying discourse on "Lincoln the Commander in Chief" is revealing of the author's thoroughness in historical research, keenness in critical analysis of wartime strategy and of inevitable frictions in its leadership, and discrimination in assaying the conflicting forces that always are concomitants of all great wartime crises. These scholarly properties are reflections of the eminence attained by T. Harry Williams in his specialized fields in American history—those of Lincoln and of the Civil War.

The text here printed is that of Dr. Williams' address before the Lincoln Fellowship of Wisconsin in 1956. The author is Wisconsin-bred and educated—



a graduate of the State Teachers College (now Platteville State College), and with the Master's degree and the Doctorate from the University of Wisconsin. Following a teaching assignment for the University of Wisconsin Extension Division and of several years at the University of Omaha, he went to Louisiana State University, where he now holds the distinguished rank of Boyd Professor of History.

In historical authorship, Dr. Williams has attained eminence now widely recognized. His first work, "Lincoln and the Radicals," introduced him as a Lincoln scholar of much promise. Then followed "Selected Writings and Speeches of Abraham Lincoln" and "Lincoln and His Generals" (a Book-of-the-Month Club selection). In 1955 he published the definitive biography of the dramatic Confederate leader, General P. G. T. Beauregard, which the New York Times described as a "Pulitzer prize caliber biography."

Dr. Williams has contributed to many historical magazines and other publications, and regularly reviews books for the New York Times and the Saturday Review of Literature. He was selected last year to contribute a chapter on the American Civil War to the Cambridge University Modern History—an honor rarely accorded to American scholars. A further honor was his appointment by the Secretary of the Army to the Army's Historical Advisory Committee. He is also an editorial consultant for the new quarterly journal, "Civil War History."

The author's fame as teacher and public speaker is comparable to that as a Lincoln scholar. He is in constant demand by Civil War Round Tables and other groups throughout the United States.

Dr. Williams' analysis of Lincoln as commander in chief is brilliantly illustrative of his talent for historical research and writing and for presenting his findings in ways that contribute richly to our better understanding of the American scene in periods coming under his dependable scrutiny.—L. W. B.

LINCOLN THE COMMANDER IN CHIEF

By

T. HARRY WILLIAMS, PH. D.

War has its own nomenclature. Three basic terms are policy, strategy, and tactics. Policy is concerned with the purpose for which a war is fought, and in popular governments is determined by the civil branch of the government, which decides when, with whom, and for what objective war will be waged. The civil government also decides the number of men and amount of materiel to be allotted to the military branch. Strategy may be defined as the art of command. As practiced in the nineteenth century, it meant that the commander, or commanders, took the resources provided by the civil government and so planned and directed operations as to achieve the purpose of the policy. Strategy in a democracy is usually the joint product of the civil and military branches. Tactics is the arrangement and direction of troops in the presence of the enemy as battle is joined.

In America's first wars, no sharply defined command system to integrate policy and strategy existed. Washington and the Continental Congress, represented by an agency known as the Board of War, formulated strategy in the Revolution. In the War of 1812 President Madison and the Cabinet and generals in the field all tried their hands at strategic planning; the man who exercised the strongest influence on military affairs was Secretary of War John Armstrong. The first president to function actively as commander in chief was Polk in the Mexican War. Polk not only acted as the government's chief budget officer during the war, but, in conjunction with the secretary of war and the field commanders, planned and directed strategic movements in distant theaters. Although Polk proceeded on the basis that he was the director of war, he did not create any formal organization through which to assert his powers. No actual or efficient command system had been worked out when in 1861 the nation entered its first great war and the first of the modern total wars.

At the outset of the Civil War there existed an organization that was called "the staff of the army" or even on occasion "the general staff." It bore little if any resemblance to a modern general staff. The members were the heads of the bureaus and departments in the War Department: the quartermaster general, the chief of ordnance, the adjutant general, and others. The staff held no joint meetings and framed no common plans; no person or section in it was charged with the function of studying war or preparing war plans. In short, its work was completely technical and administrative in nature, and each bureau head went pretty much his own way.

Presiding over the staff and the entire army organization was the general in chief, the general officer of ranking grade. In 1861 this post was held by Winfield Scott, veteran of the War of 1812 and the Mexican War, who was seventy-five years old and in such bad health that he could barely walk. Scott was one of the two officers in service who had ever commanded men in large enough numbers to be called an army; the other was John E. Wool, who was two years older than Scott! Except for Scott and Wool, not an officer in the North had directed

the evolutions of as large a unit as a brigade. The largest army that most of young officers had ever seen was Scott's force of 14,000 in the Mexican War. Even if Scott had been younger and healthier, it is doubtful if he could have filled the role of general in chief in the Civil War. All his experience had been with small armies, and he probably could not have adjusted his thinking to the requirements of the mass armies called forth after 1861.

At the head of the American military system was the president, the commander in chief of all the armed forces. The man who was president in 1861 had been a civilian all his life; he had had no military education and no military experience except for a brief interlude of militia service. The president of the rival Confederate States was a graduate of West Point, had served in the regular army as a volunteer soldier in the Mexican War, and had been secretary of war. Abraham Lincoln was a great war director, Jefferson Davis was a mediocre one. The war careers of the two men illustrate the truth of Clausewitz's dictum that an acquaintance with military affairs is not the principal qualification for a director of war but that "a remarkable, superior mind and strength of character" are better qualifications.

By the power of his mind and the strength of his character, Lincoln became a fine strategist. His very first acts in the war were bold and imaginative moves for a man dealing with military questions for the first time. He grasped the importance of economic warfare, and proclaimed a naval blockade of the South. He knew that human and material resources were on his side; so he called for 400,000 troops. He saw the advantage that numbers gave the North, and urged his generals to keep up a constant and relentless pressure on the whole line of the Confederacy until a weak spot was found—and a break-through could be made. And he soon realized, if he did not know it from the beginning, that the proper objective of his armies was the destruction of the Confederate armies and not the occupation of Southern territory. He was a better natural strategist than were most of his generals.

During the first three years of the war, Lincoln performed many of the functions that in a modern command system would be done by the chief of the general staff or by the joint chiefs of staff. He formulated policy, devised strategic plans, and even directed tactical movements. For this he has been criticized by later students of the war, who contend that he "interfered" too much with military operations. In considering their strictures, it is first necessary to emphasize that Lincoln operated in the absence of a formal command system. Judged by modern standards, he did some things that a war director should not do. But he was acting according to the standards of his time, acting as previous presidents had in time of war. Second, it was fortunate for the Union that Lincoln did interfere with his generals. It is often forgotten that the Union armies before 1864 were led by some prize incompetents. Lincoln had generals who were good at preparing and training and making plans. There was one thing they were not good at, one thing they did not want to do—fight. Many of Lincoln's so-called interferences were nothing more than attempts to make his generals seek a decision, to perform the role for which generals and armies exist in war. The third and vital point is the strategic objective for which Lincoln in-

tervened in army affairs. He and Davis have both been criticized for their interferences. If the strategy of a nation is sound and if the war director is an intelligent man, the effect of his intervention will be generally salutary. Lincoln interfered to make a sound offensive strategy more offensive. Davis interfered to make a faulty defensive strategy more defensive. The criticism of Davis should not be that he meddled with the military but that he interfered from a wrong basis, from a defective strategic base.

In the beginning months of the war, Lincoln naturally turned to Scott for advice. He soon discovered that the old general was not the man for the job. Scott had done no thinking about over-all strategy, and when asked by the President to present a general plan, he was obviously caught by surprise. He proposed a design which called for a naval blockade of the Southern coast and the occupation of the Mississippi River line. Having secured these points, Scott would then enfold the South in a gigantic military circle, isolating it from the outside world. There he would stop—and wait for a supposed Union sentiment in the Confederacy to assert itself. This was the famous “anaconda plan,” which was to squeeze the South to death. Although it had obvious merits, notably the seizure of the Mississippi line, it was fundamentally defective. For one thing, it would take too long to make its effects felt. More important, it represented the one-idea or one-weapon concept of strategy. Lincoln the civilian saw more clearly than Scott the soldier that no one mode of strategy, no single branch of the military service was going to win the war.

By November 1, 1861, Scott had been persuaded to retire, and to his place as general in chief Lincoln named young George B. McClellan, who was also the field commander of the Army of the Potomac. McClellan, who would display many shortcomings as a field general, did not possess the abilities to be an over-all commander. His chief defect was that he was unable to adjust his plans to the realities of Federal resources. At the request of the president, he prepared a scheme of grand strategy which was one of the queerest proposals ever received by Lincoln. He proposed that an army of 273,000 men be raised in the eastern theater to operate under his command. The navy would land this host on the coast east of Richmond, from whence he would march inland and capture the enemy capital. Then the navy would transport him farther down the coast-line, and he would repeat the process against points like Wilmington, Charleston, and New Orleans. At that time the government could not have raised that many men or fed and housed them in one theater; nor did the sea transport exist to carry the troops where McClellan wanted to take them. The plan had the further defect of concentrating operations in one theater.

Outside of this proposal, McClellan indulged in no general strategic thinking worthy of the name. When he took the field in March, 1862, Lincoln relieved him as general in chief on the grounds that a field commander would not be able to administer to other armies. The president did not appoint another officer to the position of general in chief until July. In the interim Lincoln acted as general in chief as well as commander in chief. The only technical military advice he received came from an agency known as the Army Board, consisting of the heads of the various bureaus in the War Department. It was during this period that

Lincoln detached McDowell's corps from McClelland's army on the eve of the Peninsula campaign and planned the combined movements in the Shenandoah Valley to trap Stonewall Jackson. His handling of the Valley campaign demonstrated the strength and the weaknesses in his strategic capacities as they were developed by 1862. His basic concept—an offensive to destroy the Confederate menace in the Valley—was eminently sound. The plan failed because he minimized the practical difficulties in the way—distance, supplies, and marching problems. In fine, he ignored some of the vital factors in logistics.

Although Lincoln had come to have some serious doubts of the capabilities of the military mind, he sensed that there was something wrong in the present system: that he, a civilian, was planning and doing things that should be done by a military man. He decided to re-create the office of general in chief, and to try again the experiment of having a general direct the movements of the armies.

In July he called Henry W. Halleck to Washington as general in chief. He selected Halleck for what seemed to be excellent reasons. Before the war Halleck had been known as the foremost American student of the art of war, one of the few officers who could read in French the works of the great French masters. Halleck had translated several of these works, and had written a book of his own on military science, almost the only study of the higher art of war by an American officer. Halleck also seemed to be a successful field general. In his western department in 1862 several important victories had been won, and although the credit for these belonged to U. S. Grant, they were ascribed to Halleck. By any reasonable standards, he appeared to be the ideal man for the job.

Lincoln intended that Halleck should be a real general in chief, should actually plan and direct operations. When some field commander would write the president about some problem, Lincoln would reply that the officer must consult Halleck who had charge of the entire field. And at first Halleck did act as general in chief—but not for long. The fundamental trouble with Halleck was that he disliked responsibility. He delighted to provide technical knowledge and to advise, but he shrank from making decisions. He came to think that when a field general won a victory the general received the credit, but if the general was defeated the blame fell on the general in chief in Washington. After the second battle of Manassas, Halleck experienced almost a mental breakdown. Thereafter he deliberately cast himself in the role of a technical adviser. If Lincoln asked him for counsel, he would furnish it, but if the president asked him to make a decision and order something done, he would refuse. Halleck's failure to measure up to the requirements of his job forced Lincoln to resume the function of general in chief, a function which he exercised until the spring of 1864.

Lincoln continued, however, to keep Halleck on in the post of general in chief, even though he often instituted important movements without the general's knowledge. For example, Halleck heard on the streets in Washington that General Hooker's army had crossed the Rappahannock River in the opening campaign of the spring of 1863. Again, Lincoln planned a very important movement on the lower Mississippi which Halleck found out about largely by accident. Lincoln kept Halleck near him because he had discovered that the general

could perform one valuable service for him—in the area of military communication. On several occasions Lincoln and his generals had serious misunderstandings because, almost literally, they did not speak the same language. Lincoln would have a particular strategic concept, which often was very sound, but he would be unable to frame his idea, particularly in writing, in terms that the general concerned could understand. In speaking about the size of a contemplated force in Kansas, he said that he intended it to be “a snug, sober little column;” it turned out that he was thinking of 10,000 to 15,000 troops. Conversely, when a general proposed a plan to Lincoln couched in military jargon, Lincoln would not always understand what the military mind was trying to say. Halleck had associated so much with soldiers and civilians that he could speak the language of both. He could express Lincoln’s thoughts to the military and the soldier’s ideas to the president in terms that both could grasp. Increasingly, Lincoln came to entrust the framing of his directives to Halleck.

There can be little doubt that in the latter part of 1862 and in 1863 Lincoln had come to have a kind of scorn for professional soldiers. Inclined to defer too much to their judgment in the Scott and early McClellan period, he had passed to the opposite extreme of being too prone to substitute his judgment for theirs. But when the generals he had to deal with are considered, who can blame him? He had been outraged by the spectacle of general after general who put up excuse after excuse for not fighting: they needed more men, then more supplies for the additional men, then more transportation for the added supplies—and so on indefinitely. Lincoln’s impatience with the professionals was reflected in his selection of two civilian generals, Banks and McClelland, to conduct operations on the Mississippi in the latter part of 1862.

It was during this period that many of Lincoln’s so-called interferences occurred. Three examples will illustrate the frustrating problems which confronted the president and reveal the character of the generals with whose affairs he “interfered.”

Example I: After the battle of Chancellorsville, General Lee put in motion an offensive into Pennsylvania—the operation that culminated in the Gettysburg campaign. Moving his army from around Fredericksburg south of the Rappahannock River, he swung westward to the Valley and then headed north for the Potomac. North of the river Joseph Hooker, commander of the Army of the Potomac, watched the movements of the man who had defeated him at Chancellorsville. Hooker, who had a keen strategic sense, soon realized Lee’s purpose: to invade Maryland or Pennsylvania. And how was the trained soldier, the expert, going to counter Lee’s movement? He proposed to Lincoln that the government assemble a force of reserves and home guards to stall Lee while he took his army to attack Richmond. As Lincoln pointed out in rejecting the plan, Hooker would only waste his army battering at the Richmond defenses while Lee roamed at large above the Potomac. And even if Hooker could take Richmond, the prize would not compensate for the prestige the Confederacy would gain by a success on Northern soil. Hooker’s obvious move was to place his army where he could meet Lee on favorable grounds—which is what Lincoln made him do.

Example II: While Grant was fastening his grip on Vicksburg, Lincoln worried that the Confederates might send troops from their forces around Chattanooga to reinforce the Confederate army in Mississippi for an attack on Grant's rear. To prevent such an event, he asked General W. S. Rosecrans, the Federal commander in Tennessee, to launch an offensive to contain the Confederate army in its present location. Rosecrans replied with an almost incredible analysis of the situation. He said he did not think it wise to undertake a forward movement. If he succeeded, he would only drive the Confederates closer to Mississippi and to Grant. The smart thing, he said, was to sit where he was and hold the enemy's attention. Apparently it never dawned on the general that it might be possible for him to advance and win a victory. He finally did move—in response to peremptory orders from the president.

Example III: At the battle of Gettysburg, General George Meade hurt Lee's army badly. Lee, burdened with a train of wounded and with most of his artillery ammunition gone, retreated toward the Potomac. When he reached the river, rains had made the water so high he could not lay pontoon bridges. In a desperate mood, Lee entrenched and waited attack. Meade, following cautiously, approached Lee's lines, probed at them gingerly, and after a council of war decided not to attack. Eventually the river lowered, and Lee escaped. Lincoln, reading the reports of Gettysburg, saw the obvious truth: that Lee was hurt and that a decisive blow at him north of the Potomac would destroy his army and perhaps end the war. He also sensed that Meade shrank from taking the risk necessary to deliver such a blow. Meade was satisfied to see Lee leave his front; for him that was victory enough. His psychology was revealed in his congratulatory order to his troops in which he complimented them for having driven the enemy from "our soil." When Lincoln read the order, he exclaimed in anguish, "My God! Is that all?" Lincoln, through Halleck, urged Meade to complete his work with a finishing attack, but the general was content to herd Lee across the Potomac. Weeks later Lincoln said to Meade in Washington, "Do you know, general, what your attitude towards Lee for a week after the battle reminded me of?" "No, Mr. President, what is it?" replied Meade. "I'll be hanged if I could think of anything else," said Lincoln, "than an old woman trying to shoo her geese across a creek."

In each of these episodes, and in others as well, the president was right and the general was wrong. As he learned from experience, Lincoln was steadily growing in stature as a strategist, and he loomed high above the generals through whom he had to work. But he was willing, as he had been earlier, to yield the power to direct strategic operations to any general who could demonstrate that he was competent to frame and execute strategy—if he could find the general. By 1864 both he and the nation were sure they had found the man—U. S. Grant, who had emerged as the most successful of the Northern generals. And in that year the United States finally achieved an efficient and a modern command system to fight a modern war.

In a system arrived at in 1864, which was the joint product of Lincoln and Congress, Grant was named general in chief, charged with directing the movements of all Union armies. Grant, because he disliked the political atmosphere

of Washington, established his headquarters with the Army of the Potomac but did not technically command it, that function remaining with Meade. As general in chief, Grant justified every hope in his capacities. He possessed in superb degree the ability to think of the war in over-all terms and to devise strategy for the war as a whole. His grand plan of operations in 1864 was a brilliant exercise in strategic thinking. It is not true, however, as Grant stated in his memoirs, that Lincoln gave him a completely free hand and did not even know what the general was planning. Grant submitted to Lincoln for approval the general outlines of his plan. Lincoln, approving the broad objectives and trusting Grant, did not seek to know the details. Moreover, Grant conformed his strategy to Lincoln's ideas: hit the Confederacy from all sides with pulverizing blows and make enemy armies the main objectives. And even though Lincoln trusted Grant, he did not hesitate to check him when he thought it was necessary. He made Grant, in effect, come to Washington to take personal supervision of the campaign against Early in the Valley, and he restrained him from prematurely removing Thomas before the battle of Nashville. In both cases, the president was right, and the general was wrong.

In the new arrangement Halleck received a new office: "chief of staff." He was not exactly a chief of staff in the modern sense. Primarily he was a channel of communication between Lincoln and Grant and between Grant and the seventeen departmental commanders. Because of Halleck's happy faculty of speaking the languages of the civilian and the soldier, Lincoln and Grant never misunderstood each other. Grant rarely wrote to Lincoln. He sent most of his dispatches to Halleck, who briefed them for the president. Halleck also served as a liaison between Grant and the generals commanding departments. At Grant's request, the reports of these officers were sent to Halleck, who either transmitted them to Grant or summarized their contents for the general in chief. In similar fashion, Halleck relieved Grant of the burden of preparing strategic directions for the departments. Often Grant would tell Halleck in general terms what he wanted done and would direct the chief of staff to put his purpose in detailed, written instructions to the subordinate concerned. Halleck, the ideal office soldier, had found his ideal niche. He was one reason the 1864 system worked.

It worked brilliantly. It was one of the big reasons the North won the war. The 1864 system of commander in chief to state the general strategy, a general in chief to give it specific form, and a chief of staff to coordinate information and intelligence gave the United States a modern command system. It was superior to any arrangement then existing in Europe, and was at least as good as the Prussian staff machine that was about to be unveiled in the wars of 1866 and 1870. In fact, in its efficient centralization of authority, in its delegation of powers, in its essential simplicity, it was probably better than anything we have had since.

IN TRIBUTE TO LOUIS A. WARREN, Retired

With countless friends nationwide, the Lincoln Fellowship of Wisconsin joins in a salute to Dr. Louis A. Warren upon the close of an extremely productive career as director of the Lincoln National Life Foundation. This event last year has drawn encomiums of wide diversity and rich appreciation. His retirement became effective July 1, 1956. He now becomes director emeritus of the Foundation.

Dr. Warren ranks among the top authorities in Lincolniana. In Wisconsin he is known widely from his frequent visits on speaking tours, always extended gratuitously. He was present in Madison in 1940 at the organization meeting of the Lincoln Fellowship of Wisconsin where he voiced his high hopes for a long and fruitful service in the work in which we have since continuously been engaged. From him has come, ever since, helpful advisory aid and information frequently asked.

Louis A. Warren was director of the Foundation of the Lincoln National Life Insurance Company since 1928. From his store of Lincoln knowledge have come such works as "Lincoln's Parentage and Childhood;" "Slavery Atmosphere of Lincoln's Youth;" "Little Known Lincoln Episodes;" "Abraham Lincoln, a Concise Biography;" "Lincoln Biography Check List;" "Indiana's Contribution to Abraham Lincoln," and the monumental periodical of the Foundation, "Lincoln Lore," which he edited every week from its beginning in 1929. For some years, also, he edited "The Lincoln Kinsman" and "The Lincoln Digest."

Massachusetts-born, Dr. Warren became enamored of the Lincoln quest in 1918 while serving as editor of the LaRue County Herald at Hodgenville, Kentucky, following his graduation from Transylvania University. By Lincoln Memorial University, Harrogate, Tennessee, he was awarded the honorary degree, Doctor of Literature.

Dr. Warren lectured, invariably without notes, before schools, clubs and other groups on a variety of subjects in the Lincoln field. The Wisconsin Legislature was one of these receptive groups. His eloquent discourse on the Gettysburg Address reached many appreciative audiences on countrywide tours. He was one of our best champions of the much abused Mary Todd Lincoln.

It was Dr. Warren who, in 1941, originated the Lincoln Advisory Board, a national body designated to nominate the Lincoln Book of the Year, the best magazine article and the most timely editorial keyed to Lincoln's anniversary. On this board the secretary of the Wisconsin Fellowship was privileged to serve through Dr. Warren's appointment.

Upon a recent significant Warren anniversary, toward which many nationwide tributes were directed, the secretary of the Wisconsin Fellowship sent this message:

"The magnificent breadth of Dr. Warren's acquaintance with the Lincoln theme; his insistence upon truth and nothing but the truth in every detail of the Lincoln saga; the national influence of his lectures and writings—these reflect in a large measure his distinguished contribution to a Lincoln-educated citizenry."

Dr. Warren's successor at the Fort Wayne offices and museum of the Lincoln National Life Foundation is Dr. R. Gerald McMurtry, head (since 1927) of the department of Lincolniana at Lincoln Memorial University in Tennessee and editor of its quarterly, "The Lincoln Herald." He too ranks among the foremost scholars in the Lincoln and Civil War fields. At Lincoln Memorial he built a great Lincoln and Civil War library and collection—now one of the largest in existence. It was his dream, and the trustees' objective, sometime to erect a magnificent Lincoln Library building to house these collections. Your contributions to this project can go to no better citizen-building cause.

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THEY GAVE THEIR ALL THAT THE LINCOLN TRADITION MIGHT LIVE

In the chronology of events in the field of Lincolnia during 1956 must be recorded with sadness and a sense of public loss the passing of two of our most distinguished and resourceful writers—each an Honorary Member of the Lincoln Fellowship of Wisconsin—Dr. Harry E. Pratt and Dr. Benjamin P. Thomas, both of Springfield, Illinois.

HARRY EDWARD PRATT

December 16, 1901 — February 12, 1956

Harry E. Pratt was our speaker in Madison on February 12, 1946—exactly ten years prior to his unexpected death in 1956. That his demise should coincide with the anniversary of the birth of the ageless exemplar about whom he wrote so long and authoritatively was a happening widely observed.

Dr. Pratt's Madison address was on the topic, "Lincoln in the Legislature." This highly informing paper was published the next year in the annual series of Historical Bulletins of the Lincoln Fellowship, and received a wide distribution. His "Personal Finances of Abraham Lincoln" was acclaimed the best Lincoln book of 1943 and as one of the rare specimens of the "genuinely original contributions in Lincoln literature."

Few writers have produced such a wealth of factual writings on so many facets of the Lincoln story as Harry Pratt. Indicative of the breadth of his knowledge and abilities were these (among other) official trusts: Executive secretary of the Abraham Lincoln Association and associate editor of the Abraham Lincoln Quarterly; teacher of history at Ball State Teachers College, Muncie, Indiana; secretary-treasurer of the Illinois State Historical Society; Illinois State Historian and director of the Illinois State Historical Library; editor of the Journal of the Illinois State Historical Society.

Carl Sandburg dedicated his "Abraham Lincoln: The Prairie Years and the War Years," a one-volume abridgment of the massive six-volume biography, to Harry E. and Marion D. Pratt, and characterized husband and wife as "a handsome team of Lincoln scholars."

Dr. Pratt's resting place is in Oak Ridge Cemetery, in the shadow of Lincoln's Tomb.

BENJAMIN PLATT THOMAS

February 22, 1902 — November 29, 1956

The unexpected passing of Benjamin P. Thomas late in 1956 recalls another eventful meeting of our Wisconsin Fellowship. For it was this noted Lincoln scholar from Springfield who delivered the address before our state group on February 10, 1950, on the topic, "For Us the Living."

On this provocative theme the author outlined with scholarly discernment the pattern of totalitarian policies that at the moment were seen splitting the

world apart. Dr. Thomas discerned that the fight for freedom that Lincoln fought was an issue still—an eternal struggle of ideologies just as Lincoln foretold.

Dr. Thomas' researches and writings were of wide range. His early work, "Lincoln's New Salem," and his "Lincoln 1847-1853" (an authoritative chronicle of Lincoln's day-by-day activities), helped further to establish his reputation for dependable, factual writing. In his "Portrait for Posterity" readers are brought into intimate acquaintance with the "story behind the Lincoln books," based on the correspondence of the Lincoln biographers, and are enabled better to evaluate many beliefs, traditions, truths and untruths that have helped shape popular conceptions of the Lincoln we know in the books.

One of Dr. Thomas' later works, "Abraham Lincoln: a Biography" (1952), was termed by none other than Carl Sandburg as "the most scrupulously written of all Lincoln biographies," and by Paul Angle as "the best one-volume biography of Abraham Lincoln ever published and *the* biography for at least a generation."

Dr. Thomas' magazine writings, particularly his contributions to the Abraham Lincoln Quarterly (now discontinued), have been widely read and appreciated. He served as executive secretary, and later as director, of the former Abraham Lincoln Association and member of its editorial board, and as trustee of the Illinois State Historical Library. Another helpful service was as editorial adviser for the nine-volume "Collected Works of Abraham Lincoln."

The address by Dr. Thomas in 1950 before the Lincoln Fellowship of Wisconsin was published as the text for the Fellowship's 1951 Historical Bulletin, and is still available by collectors.

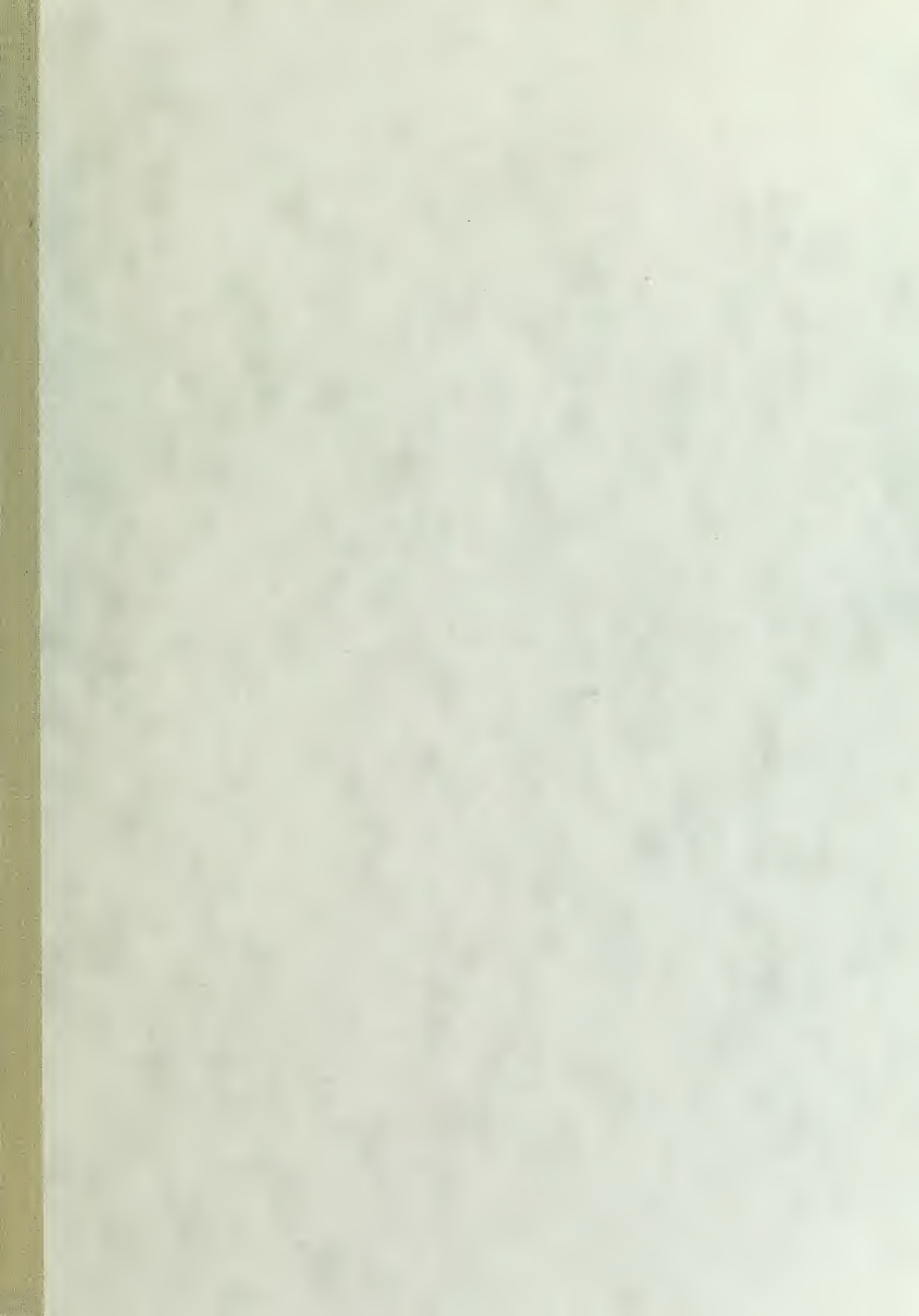
HISTORICAL BULLETINS

Published by

THE LINCOLN FELLOWSHIP OF WISCONSIN

- 1943—"Lincoln on Agriculture," Address by Abraham Lincoln before Wisconsin State Agriculture Society, 1859. (Out of print.)
- 1944—"Lincoln Comes to Wisconsin," Address at Annual Meeting of Lincoln Fellowship of Wisconsin, by Edward P. Alexander, Director, State Historical Society of Wisconsin. (Out of print).
- 1945—"A Pilgrimage to the Lincoln Country," Address at Annual Meeting of Lincoln Fellowship of Wisconsin, by Arthur C. Hansen, M. D., Wauwatosa, Wisconsin. (Out of print).
- 1946—"Abraham Lincoln in Wisconsin," Address at Annual Meeting of Lincoln Fellowship of Wisconsin, by George P. Hambrecht, Madison, Wisconsin. (Out of print).
- 1947—"Lincoln in the Legislature," Address at Annual Meeting of Lincoln Fellowship of Wisconsin, by Harry E. Pratt, Springfield, Illinois.
- 1948—"The Heart of Abraham Lincoln," by Albert H. Griffith, Fisk, Winnebago County, Wisconsin.
- 1949—"Lincoln Visits Beloit and Janesville, Wisconsin" (Contemporary Accounts of Anti-Slavery Speeches of October 1, 1859), by Louis W. Bridgman.
- 1950—"The Lincoln Statue at the University of Wisconsin," Addresses at Ceremonies of Acceptance and of Dedication (1909) of Only Replica of the Adolph A. Weinman Statue at Hodgenville, Kentucky.
- 1951—"For Us the Living," Address at Annual Meeting of Lincoln Fellowship of Wisconsin, by Benjamin P. Thomas, Springfield, Illinois.
- 1952—"Lincoln's Problems in Wisconsin," Address at Annual Meeting of Lincoln Fellowship of Wisconsin, by William B. Hesseltine, Ph. D., The University of Wisconsin, Madison.
- 1953—"The Hooker Letter," Address before Milwaukee Civil War Round Table, by Arthur C. Hansen, M. D., Wauwatosa, Wisconsin.
- 1954—"President Lincoln's Blockade and the Defense of Mobile," Address at Annual Meeting of Lincoln Fellowship of Wisconsin, by W. Norman FitzGerald, Jr., Milwaukee, Wisconsin.
- 1955—"The Abraham Lincoln Industry," Address at Annual Meeting of Lincoln Fellowship of Wisconsin, by Ralph G. Newman, Chicago, Illinois.
- 1956—"Lincoln's Critics in Wisconsin," Address at Annual Meeting of Lincoln Fellowship of Wisconsin, by Frank L. Klement, Ph. D., Marquette University.
- 1957—"Lincoln the Commander in Chief," Address at Annual Meeting of Lincoln Fellowship of Wisconsin, by T. Harry Williams, Ph. D., Baton Rouge, La.

These publications, except those noted as out of print, are still available at 50 cents each, upon application to the Secretary, Lincoln Fellowship of Wisconsin, 1910 Kendall Avenue, Madison 5, Wisconsin.



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